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SECTION C, PAGE 1

Navarre readies for disasters

■ CERT volunteers will aid area that primarily relies on county resources.

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NAVARRE — Eight months after Hurricane Ivan turned Navarre into a chaotic jumble of downed trees and power lines, residents are coming up with new ways to respond to future disasters.

Plans are under way to form that area's first Community Emergency Response Team, or CERT.

Used statewide by counties

and cities, the teams are designed to assist existing emergency crews during a disaster.

"What CERT does is augment first responders when things happen," said T.J. Doherty, a Navarre resident and coordinator of the local CERT effort. "What we saw during Hurricane Ivan is what happens when the county gets overtaxed."

Doherty, also a member of the Navarre Beach Area

Chamber of Commerce, said the teams are especially needed in Navarre, where there is no local government.

"We rely on the county," he said. "If the county has trouble getting down here, this is a way the community can get going."

In the days following Hurricane Ivan, CERTs would have been helpful to local fire departments and patrol officers, said Holley-Navarre Fire Chief Les Slocum.

"Somebody can come and cook for us," he said. "That's a big help. Traffic control would have been outstanding. With no power there were

FOR MORE INFO

For more information about CERT or to volunteer for the upcoming training, e-mail T.J. Doherty at TJ@MC130.com or call 936-9384.

no power lights."

Slocum has donated the fire station's meeting room for CERT training, which is expected to begin in mid-July. CERT volunteers receive seven weeks of training and wear identifiable vests and badges while working an event.

"The more volunteers you

have, the better," he said.

Doherty said he expects to eventually have specialized CERTs that are deployed for specific situations.

"We'll have search and rescue teams," he said. "We'll have chainsaw teams ... to clear the way on heavy thoroughfares."

Doherty said he is looking for anyone 15 and older who is willing to serve the community.

"We're going to need administrative people, people with a logistics background, with a communications background," he said. "We'll find a place for whoever comes."